

# California-Nevada Tahoe Basin Fire Commission

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## **BACKGROUND**

The Commission was established by Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by Governors Schwarzenegger and Gibbons in July 2007 following the Angora Fire.

The MOU created an advisory panel of 17 voting members representing each state's stake in the management of lands and fire fuels within the Tahoe Basin and included representatives from state agencies, fire officials, public members from the Lake Tahoe community and a representative of the U.S. Forest Service that manages approximately 90 percent of land in the Tahoe Basin.

The Commission was directed to perform a comprehensive review of the laws, policies and practices that affect the vulnerability of the Tahoe Basin to wildfires.

The Commission's report represents nine months of collaboration between state agencies, fire officials, environmentalists, the Lake Tahoe public and a representative of the U.S. Forest Service.

More than 50 individuals and organizations had submitted 120 proposed findings and recommendations to the Commission for consideration.

- One-third of these developed by Commissioners
- One-third developed by implementing and regulatory agencies
- One-third developed by interested members of the public – conservation community, homeowners and forestry-interest groups.

The Commission ultimately approved 48 findings and 90 recommendations to be included in its final report to the Governors.

The Commission unanimously recommended that the Governors declare a State of Emergency because of the extreme threat that catastrophic fire poses to the Basin, its residents and the unique natural resource that is Lake Tahoe.

The findings and recommendations are organized into six categories (see "Key Recommendations Summary") that together constitute a plan for reducing the Basin's vulnerability to catastrophic wildfire and the impacts that fire would have on the Lake's fragile environment.

- Environmental Protection
- Community and Homeowner Fire Prevention
- Forest and Fuels Management
- Issues of Government
- Fire Suppression
- Funding

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

Q: How does the Commission's report address the issues of competing government bureaucracies?

A: The Commission's report does not let any one agency off the hook and recommends that all regulatory and implementing agencies work cooperatively to streamline codes, waive overlapping requirements and work cooperatively. The report advises that fire prevention take precedence over other concerns.

Q: Do the Commission's findings and recommendations promote increased logging and development?

A: No. The Commission's findings and recommendations are about reducing the threat of catastrophic wildfire in the Basin and to protect Lake Tahoe from the consequences of catastrophic fire. This is about doing all we can – on a local, state and federal level – to protect people, property and the environment.

Q: What is the long-term plan? Is the Commission asking Congress and the President to increase funding for fuels treatment?

A: The federal government (Forest Service) owns 90 percent of the property in the Lake Tahoe Basin. The Commission recognizes that our forests are overgrown with many unhealthy trees. We need to do all we can to increase funding and capacity to make these forests healthier and safer, in a manner that minimizes environmental impact. A disaster declaration by the Governors of California and Nevada is one step in this process.

Q: Haven't there been huge improvements already between the fire officials and the regulatory agencies in the Basin?

A: Yes. Governor Schwarzenegger and Governor Gibbons demonstrated leadership in creating the Commission. The Commission succeeded in focusing discussions on shared goals, and in coordinating the progress that implementing and regulatory agencies are making. The Basin's fire chiefs also deserve credit for proposing critical fire prevention recommendations that were embraced in the Commission's report.

Q: Will the Commission's recommendations have an adverse impact on the environment?

A: The recommendations will be thoroughly vetted through a public process to enhance environmental protection while reducing the threat of catastrophic wildfires.